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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
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# OPDEC AND THE REAL-TIME MEDIA:
# CNN AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

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Bruce M. Ross
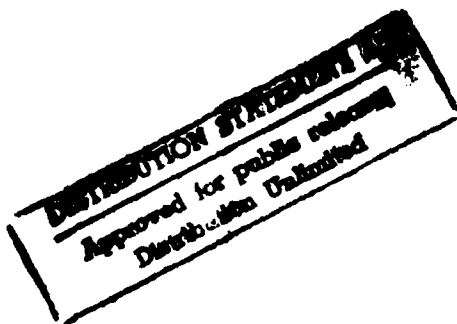
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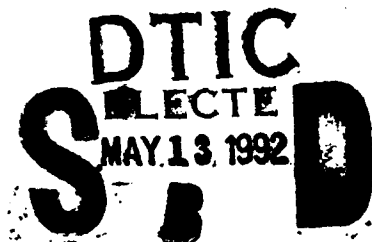
A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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The art of deception in warfare has been practiced for many millenia and still has an important place in the operational commander's repertoire. However, technological advances and sociological trends in the news media -- and the electronic media in particular -- will increasingly expose the actual events on the battlefield in near real-time. This will complicate the commander's ability to be successful in this often decisive warfighting practice. Creative use of the media may in fact be used to increase the effectiveness of a commander's deception plan. But the commander must recognize that media-OPDEC is a two-edged sword that presents risk as well as opportunity. The commander must conciously consider the long term implications inherent in deceiving the media before undertaking such deception.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPDEC AND THE REAL-TIME MEDIA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"All war is based on deception" wrote Sun Tzu almost 2400 years ago.  Although
warfare has changed much in the years since Sun Tzu, deception is still a central issue to the
operational art.   A significant new element in the practice of deception is the existence of an
independent news system free to report on the events of a war.  Today's media are using
equipment that in many cases is as technologically advanced as the equipment used by the
military.  This, and an increasingly pan-national news corps, has lead to a revolution in
reporting that may dramatically influence the commander's ability to conduct operational
deception on the enemy.

While much has been written on the military-media relationship in the wake of the
recent conflict with Iraq, most has focused on achieving a balance between the commander's
need for operational security (OPSEC - denying the enemy knowledge of your real intentions
and capabilities) and the First Amendment right of a free press; or on the public relations
coups or failures of the various services in promoting their service's capabilities and
professionalism.   Little has been written about how the press helped or hindered the
commanders' deception plans.  In view of these increasingly intrusive news systems, is it
still possible for the operational commander to achieve effective deception at the operational
level of war?

Judging from the success of deception in the Gulf War, the answer is yes.  But how
was this success achieved given the seemingly omnipresent media?  This paper will explore
the effects of technology and the driving forces of today's media on the military-media
relationship;  how can the  the theater CinC best use the unique capabilities of the electronic
media to maximize the chances for operational success; and how such "use" of the media may

1

have undesirable side-effects.

For the purposes of this paper, the term "electronic media" refers to (television and radio) and print news gathering and reporting networks; "press" refers to the print media.

CHAPTER II

THE CHANGING FACE OF THE MEDIA: TECHNOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

"It helps to understand the media. It even helps to like them, God bless."
– Barry Zorthian, as quoted in <u>Vietnam: 10 Years Later</u>

"Journalism consists of buying white paper at two cents a pound and
selling it at ten cents a pound."[1]
- Charles A. Dana

Vietnam is often referred to as being the first TV war. If that is so, the fact is that the reporting of news has taken a quantum leap in the two decades since the conclusion of that conflict. News reporting today is big business, using the latest in high technology. War (and other on-scene news) is not only presented in full, graphic detail, it's done instantaneously. And not just at the national news level -- even mid-size television stations would not be complete without their own electronic news gathering (ENG) van. Television networks devoted exclusively to the reporting of news not only exist, but thrive. Profit motives and sociological trends dramatically influence the direction and flavor of reporting. The internationalization of the media and its attendant shift in perspective and intelligence networks all impact how the media will interact with the military. It is imperative that the operational commander understand the capabilities and motivations of today's electronic media if he is to 'capture' its potential.

<u>TECHNOLOGY AND A SHRINKING WORLD.</u> Electronic newsgathering vans (capable of shooting and editing video and audio data) using portable dish antennas can uplink communications to satellites that relay the data around the world. These systems have not only brought the war into the living room, they have done it real-time. In the Gulf war, viewers around the world were treated to the drama of the interception or impact of Scud missiles in downtown Tel Aviv. And who will soon forget the interruption of the evening news broadcast on January 16th as network reporters in Baghdad described the bursts of

3

tracer fire and explosions that lit the early morning sky as the air war began? But what reporting gains in immediacy and drama, it often loses in accuracy and depth.

Ten years ago, few would have predicted the dramatic success of CNN. But now, twenty four hours a day, viewers can get hourly updates of what's happening around the world. Viewers hungry for Gulf War news gorged themselves on CNN's repetitive hourly reports and C-SPAN viewers tuned into Congressional hearings to learn the latest on U.S. capabilities and possible strategies. It is noteworthy that the Unified CINCs pipe CNN into their war rooms and often credit CNN with being the first to break the story -- often providing information faster than the military's own intelligence and reporting systems!

Today's major networks are international in scope with armies of reporters deployed around the world. Network station chiefs often have intelligence sources the envy of many nations. U.S. based networks double-hat their correspondents (who are frequently foreign nationals) and often provide tailored newscasts to several countries in addition to the U.S. CNN offers its news service directly to the heads of more than 140 nations.[2] This global growth of the news media has led to a discernible multi-national perspective (and possibly, loyalty) of the correspondents who collect and report the news.

THE PRESSURE OF PROFIT. These modern news systems are not cheap. Networks rent satellite telecommunication services from the public and private sector at upwards of $2000 an hour (although the cost of these services is in a general decline as more satellites become commercially available). The cost of fielding large numbers of reporting teams can put enormous dents in the networks' operating budgets. For example, during February of Desert Storm, the three major networks accumulated losses of greater than $100 million.[3]

With the pressure to keep the ledger book in the black networks must offset these losses by selling advertising for as much as possible. Larger viewing audiences mean the networks can charge more for advertising time. As a result, television news reporting entertains as much as it informs. Short, sensational stories that carry visual impact make

the news. Stories that are neither sensational nor visual are usually compensated for by being very short - or not reported at all.

In fairness to the television news, its global network provides increasingly greater amounts of material that must be distilled and squeezed into the same broadcast time. Not surprisingly, in the competitive world of television news, each network seeks to "scoop" the others in the scramble to get the largest share of the viewing market - in the Gulf conflict, this meant a seemingly excessive reliance on live feeds from the theater of operations.[4] The implication for the military is that combat operations make "good copy" - especially if supporting video footage is available.

While this paper focuses on the electronic media, the printed media are not an insignificant factor in the operational deception (OPDEC) equation. In addition, the electronic media and the printed media are not isolated entities. They are frequently networked together so that information obtained by print reporters quickly finds its way into the hands of the electronic media.

For the media, the tension between responsible reporting and the market share has been heightened by the need to break even, or perhaps show a profit. The technology used by today's electronic media permits less opportunity for censoring and allows greater intrusiveness. For the military, these trends mean the media will have a greater capability - and a greater inclination - to get into the commander's operational knickers.

CHAPTER III


THE MILITARY - MEDIA RELATIONSHIP


"Nothing shall interfere with the right of a free press"
First Amendment, U.S. Constitution

Historically, there has frequently been a tension between the military commander

trying to win, and the reporters trying to cover an armed conflict. The commander feels

that his proper role is to ensure victory with as little cost to own forces as possible. This

means brooking no potential breaches to his security, and clearly, a reporter represents

just such a potential leak. For his part, the reporter has usually recognized this need for

operational security but is motivated by a distinctly different desire to report newsworthy

items as quickly as possible. The rub occurs when the concepts of operational security differ

between the two parties. Despite this potential for conflict, the relationship can work well,

but more typically, the relationship has been rocky.

THE RELATIONSHIP IN RETROSPECT. The Vietnam conflict was a watershed event for

the military-media relationship. This undeclared war was unique in that the press was

allowed unrestricted access to the entire theater - and there was virtually no censorship.

Reporting technology had improved to the point that the battlefield scenes displayed on the

nightly news were a constant reminder to the U.S. public of the horrors of war, even though

delayed a day or two owing to then prevalent technology. The failure of the U.S. to achieve

victory in that struggle has not infrequently been related to the media's handling of its war

coverage. Whether true or not, a "lesson learned" for many in the military was that the

media could not be trusted. From many reporters' perspectives, the administration and

military hierarchy were conveyors of false or misleading information designed to support a

(losing) cause in Vietnam.

During the 1983 Grenada rescue operation, the military aggravated this chronic

tension by excluding the media entirely from the operation. There were no militarily significant leaks but the media were incensed by the treatment they received.

This relationship showed some improvement during Operation Desert Shield/Storm, in part because of lessons learned from previous conflicts. The Department of Defense, in order to "short circuit" potential security problems, set up ground rules for Gulf War reporters that allowed, but controlled, media access to the battlefield and instituted a system to review reports for operationally sensitive items (a combination of self censorship and DoD review). This seemed to work fairly well, with copious amounts of reporting doing little damage to the war effort.

But even with these improvements, there continue to be recriminations about and from each side. Some reporters were accused of indiscriminate and irresponsible reporting that could have cost friendly lives. Even if reporters conscientiously censor themselves, damage to military operations caused by honest mistakes can not be corrected in live reporting (witness the inadvertent targeting correction data provided by the live reporting of Scud missile impacts in Israel). On the other hand, reporters complained of the limited number of reporters allowed in officially sanctioned reporting pools and about the military's perceived (and infrequently, real) censorship.

In addition to the cross purposes of the military and the media, the media's "distinctly liberal bias"[1] contrasts sharply with the traditional conservatism of the military. To make matters worse, the peacetime military (with its singularly large slice of the budget pie and often embarrassing procurement practices) has been a particularly inviting target for expose reporting. The result: the media and the military are frequently contentious and distrustful bedfellows.

DoD's "RULES OF ENGAGEMENT". The Department of Defense has long recognized the obligation of both the media and the armed services to keep the U.S. public informed of critical events. In the early 1980s, it issued guidance to the services regarding the release

of information entitled "The Principles of Information" (PoI). The PoI require the services

> "to make available timely and accurate information so that the public,
> Congress and members representing the press, radio, and television may
> assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy.
> Information will be made fully and readily available, consistent with
> statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by current and valid
> security classification."[2]

This policy provides for withholding information "only when the disclosure would be adversely affect national security or threaten the safety . . . of the men and women of the Armed Forces."[3] It is silent on the issue of providing false or misleading information to support OPDEC plans that could help ensure "the safety of the men and women of the Armed Forces". However, discussions with various service Public Affairs Officers reveal an abhorrence for lying to the press, even if so directed by the operational commander.[4]

Of course, these "rules" are in place for sound reasons. They help ensure civilian control of military actions. At a lower, but still important, level, they are also designed to increase and maintain the credibility of the military services for a wide variety of reasons (not the least of which are public support for recruiting and budget allocation purposes). And cynically, these rules also set the stage for effective deception by making the military a (generally) reliable source of correct information.

For the future, it is important that the military strive to maintain the credibility it has recouped since the Vietnam War. But it is also necessary to cultivate a healthy skepticism over the reporters' appetites for unlimited, uncensored operational information.

# CHAPTER IV

## OPDEC BASICS

"We are bred up to feel it is a disgrace even to succeed by falsehood: the word
spy conveys something as repulsive as slave; we will keep hammering along
with the conviction that honesty is the best policy, and that truth always wins
in the long run. These pretty little sentiments do well for a child's copy book,
but a man who acts on them had better sheathe his sword forever."
        Sir Garnet Wolseley: Soldier's Pocket Book, 1869

For our purposes, OPDEC -- ruses or stratagems -- can be defined as misleading
the enemy as to real intentions or capabilities. In this regard, it is the counterpart to
OPSEC, the purposes of both being the denying the knowledge of your true capabilities and
intentions to the enemy.

OPDEC can be considered a force multiplier because it limits the ability of the enemy
to respond to your initiatives or it limits his initiatives. Accordingly, it is needed to a
*lesser degree by the stronger force.* Even though the U.S. currently has the strongest
military forces in the world, it still has a need for OPDEC. This is especially true as the
U.S. National Military Strategy calls for reduced forward deployment with increased
emphasis on crisis response. The early stages of military intervention during such a crisis
(whether combat operations or not) is likely to see U.S. forces at a substantial disadvantage
(as in the early stages of Desert Shield). Even given a superior force, U.S. commanders
will want the surprise that deception can provide, to multiply "the chances for a quick and
decisive military success, whether measured in terms of sought goals, ground taken, or
casualty ratios."[1] Michael Handel argues a commander should always consider the use of
ruse to assure the accomplishment of his mission. "Deception almost never fails and can
almost never be avoided, even by the most successful deceivers."[2]

When conducting the Commander's Estimate matrix of comparison of courses of
action, the only positive influence the commander has on what capability the enemy chooses

9

to take is through stratagem. If a commander's artifice can reduce the likelihood of the enemy choosing a course of action unfavorable to the commander's mission; or conversely, if a ruse can influence the enemy to take action that materially helps the commander achieve his mission, the value of the deception is obvious. But it is easier said than done.

While there are no "rules" for effective deception, there are general guidelines that have empirically proven consistent with deception success. In the nomograph "Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore," ten such historically validated guidelines are proposed. While all these maxims are of value in crafting media-OPDEC plans, some are of particular interest in this exploration of the deception and media relationship, and will be considered in the next chapter.

Finally, it is important that U.S. commanders understand how the enemy might use the electronic media for deception purposes, in order that they might more effectively counter it.

CHAPTER V

MEDIA-OPDEC STRATEGIES

Given the self-imposed constraints of the Principles of Information and the
increasingly intrusive nature of news reporting, is it still worthwhile, or even possible for
the U.S. commander to attempt deception at the operational level of conflict? The answer to
that question is a resounding yes. A more difficult question is how OPDEC can be
accomplished within the constraints of the Principles of Information?

For the purposes of this discussion, media-OPDEC can be defined as activities
undertaken to support a deception program through false or misleading reporting in open
media sources. The *objective* of media-OPDEC is persuasion of the enemy to act (or not act)
in a certain, desired way. The *method* is to use the media to convey convincingly the desired
message to the enemy. A constraint on the use of media OPDEC is that the deception activity
not alienate the U.S. public (or possibly, the media themselves) over the long-term. In
other words, the deception, when (or if) revealed, must be recognized by the U.S. public as
an important measure in the prosecution of the operation. It should undertaken with the
greatest of caution and exclusively for operational reasons -- "never for political or
personal gain."[1] And even then, stand by for the outrage of the media that is sure to ensue.

FACTORS INFLUENCING MEDIA-OPDEC EFFECTIVENESS. What are the factors that
are conducive to successful media-OPDEC? Figure (1) postulates Ross's Rule of Media-
OPDEC.

| ENEMY SUSCEPTIBILITY | = | DEGREE OF DEPENDENCE | + | CREDIBILITY OF |
| TO MEDIA OPDEC | | ON OPEN INTEL SOURCES | | REPORTING SOURCE |

Figure (1)

It is important to recognize up front that the degree to which the enemy's
perceptions can be influenced by the media is a function of his dependence on media sources

11

of information. In other words, what other intelligence assets does the enemy have that he can meld into the intelligence mosaic? The fewer alternative intelligence assets available to the enemy, the more he may be influenced by open media reporting. This is an application of Jones' Lemma, which also relates a corollary deception "rule": "the greater the number of *controlled* channels [of intelligence], the greater the likelihood of the deception being believed."[2] The implication for media-OPDEC is that deceptive information delivered through the open media may work best when supplementing other "controlled channels."

The second factor in the effectiveness of media-OPDEC (as shown in figure 1) is the credibility the enemy can place in the veracity of the media's reporting. In this respect, the U.S. media has a deserved reputation for accurately reporting what it perceives to be the truth (in contrast to the propaganda machines of the former Soviet Union). As a result, the enemy is more likely to consider it a credible open intelligence source. This cuts both ways for the U.S. commander: while the enemy may be more likely to believe the information reported in the news, few reporters (if any) will damage their own credibility to accomplish the operational deception plans of the commander.

In the same vein, "great care must be exercised in the design of schemes to leak notional plans. Apparent 'windfalls' are subject to close scrutiny and often disbelieved."[3] Information that is "unearthed" by reporters (vice hand-delivered at press conferences) may carry a greater degree of credibility. "Intelligence easily obtained [is] intelligence readily disbelieved"[4] is one of the biggest drawbacks to media-OPDEC effectiveness.

As indicated above, a commander's operational deception plan is almost never going to be conducted exclusively in the realm of the electronic media. Just as an operation's success or failure should not hinge on the success or failure of the deception plan, neither should the deception plan's success rest exclusively on the success of the media-OPDEC. The commander's overall deception plan will presumably involve other sources of enemy intelligence, with the electronic media's role a supporting one.

There are two aspects of this supporting role: the first, paradoxically, is preventing

12

the media from independently uncovering and reporting the deception attempt; and the second is how can the media best supplement the deception operation. While the first case - preventing the media from compromising a deception - is primarily a security issue, it is worth taking a few paragraphs to discuss. The remainder of this chapter will focus on how the media can can supplement the deception operation.

OPDEC AND OPSEC. It is a maxim of deception is that the fewer individuals who are aware of the deception, the better. Accomplishing this feat will be increasingly difficult as the "intelligence" gathering and reporting abilities of the media continue to improve. While this paper concentrates on deception activities, OPDEC can not be artificially removed from OPSEC considerations even for academic purposes -- the two go hand-in-hand. This is increasingly true as the ability of the media to compromise the security of military operations grows.

This is not just a new problem. During the planning for the invasion of Sicily, General Eisenhower became concerned that the reporters would "soon be able to make rather accurate deductions as to the strength and timing of our attack, even if we should be successful in concealing its location."[5] His solution was extraordinary -- he took the reporters into his confidence, revealing the details of the invasion *and the deception plan.* The degree of trust in the reporters exhibited by General Eisenhower may not be warranted on such a grand scale today - not because of a less honorable media corps but rather because of its international diversity. However on a smaller scale, this may be a necessary solution. For example, several weeks before the start of the land war in the Gulf, two U.S News and World Report reporters became aware of "where coalition ground forces would strike and that amphibious operations were very unlikely."[6] That they did not break this undeniably big story was of material benefit to the success of the operation.

Another example of media encroachment into areas of military security during the recent Gulf War occurred when the networks hired the best armchair generals available

(several being recently retired flag grade officers). These experts explained the military significance of the latest bit of "intelligence" gleaned from the briefings or battlefield and offered their prognostications on future operations. During World War II, General Eisenhower laughed off the speculations of these "self-styled military analyst[s], far removed from a theater of operations" whose, "conclusions are based upon the sketchiest of information and are usually amusing rather than terrifying, *although they become dangerous as they edge closer to the truth and give statistical information to substantiate ideas*"[7] [emphasis added]. What would be his opinion today, as these speculators have substantial U.S. doctrinal experience coupled with real-time information from the battlefield? While this is correctly an OPSEC concern, it has obvious implications for deception plans as well.[8]

The foregoing indicators of media intrusiveness show that it may be increasingly necessary to creatively misdirect the media just to maintain the security of a given operation. Media pools and censorship provide a means of controlling media access; selective release of true (but not critical) information may be another way of distracting the media's attention from areas of operational security concern. These techniques - primarily aimed at maintaining security - can also collaterally lead to deception of the enemy as the news correspondents report on the items to which they have access.

One such ruse was used in the days preceding Operation EL DORADO CANYON (the 1986 retaliatory air strike on Libya for its sponsoring of terrorist activities). In the days leading up to the strike, Admiral Kelso, Commander Sixth Fleet allowed media (and Libyan) attention to focus on the activities of his Mediterranean carriers. Meanwhile F-111s and their refueling tankers would sortie from England to conduct the strike.[9] Though the bomber take-offs were noticed by the news media, their significance did not become apparent until after the raid had been accomplished.

Even if the media uncovers and reports information that compromises a commander's OPDEC program, all is not lost. "Even the awareness that deception is being used will not

14

necessarily make it avoidable because the deceiver can [then] capitalize on his adversary's fear of deception; its use places in doubt the reliability of all information received."[10] In such an instance, the commander could create ambiguity in the enemy's mind by "flooding" the media with possible operational alternatives. This is known in the deception trade as A-type (ambiguity creating) deception, and is historically, not as effective as M-type (misdirection) deception -- but is better than no deception activity. Ideally, "the objective of the planner should be to reduce the ambiguity in the mind of the victim . . . not by making him less certain of the truth, but more certain of a particular falsehood."[11]

None of the foregoing should be taken to infer that reporters are an unclever bunch - or that their reporting skills should be underestimated. They are the experts in their profession - information gathering and reporting. But the operational commander is the expert in his field of endeavor - military operations - and the reporter is often operating on the commander's turf.

One option that may be available to the commander to maintain operational security is the complete exclusion of the media from the theater of operations. This will support operations security and may therefore prevent any deception activities from being compromised by the media. This technique was used during the Grenada rescue operation as related in a previous chapter. But it also tends to alienate the media and certainly does not take advantage of the opportunities presented by the media.

MEDIA-OPDEC CONSIDERATIONS. As already mentioned, media-OPDEC activities should be in support of other deception activities, and as because of the infinite deception possibilities, it would be impossible -- and of questionable value -- to create a checklist of potential media-OPDEC tactics that the commander could use. However, there are some key points that may be of value in planning and implementing media-OPDEC measures.

Professor Michael Handel asserts that "effective deception should be based as far as possible on providing the enemy with correct information that he can independently

verify."[12] While this may raise the hair on the necks of unit security officers, it is the cornerstone of OPDEC. Commanders and their staffs should be careful not to overclassify operational information and thereby limit the amount of material available to support media-OPDEC measures. By providing the media (and therefore, potential enemies) with information that is, or soon will be, compromised anyway, they establish a credibility as an "intelligence" source that may assist in later deception efforts. Obviously, information that is released must not compromise current or future operations.

Information releases of this sort may also support other OPDEC in progress through other "controlled" intelligence avenues. Once the enemy has established the "bone-fides" of an intelligence source, he is likely to be more readily convinced of the accuracy of any subsequent information generated by that source.

When possible, the television media's appetite for sensational, visually "sexy" stories should be exploited. This can be done by allowing the video media access to selected areas or operations or by providing video footage (although the latter will be treated as suspect by both the media and the viewing enemy). An example of this tactic was used in Desert Shield when extensive media coverage was permitted on the preparations and rehearsals for the amphibious landing - that later turned out to be a feint. The visual images of LCACs crashing through the surf that quickly appeared on televisions around the world, although in retrospect an obvious ploy, was nevertheless effective in convincing the Iraqis of the imminence of an amphibious assault.

In a variation on the same theme,

> "Surprise can be achieved in many forms. In military engagements, these forms include location, strength, intention, style and timing. Should it not prove attractive or feasible to achieve surprise in all dimensions, it may still be possible to achieve surprise in at least one of these. Thus, for example, if intentions can not be concealed, it may still be possible to conceal timing (cry-wolf syndrome), place, strength or style."[13]

This deception practice has direct applicability to the problems of OPDEC and the real-time media. The media may be clued in on ongoing operations (probes or feints or even

just patrols) that fall short of actual combat but may in fact hint at upcoming operations. Over time, the enemy will become desensitized to the threat and therefore become vulnerable to the real operation when it comes. This technique has a very high success rate by historical evidence and was used, albeit without the media aspect, at the start of the Gulf air war.

The preceding examples are perhaps the best sort of media-OPDEC. The reported events were real, the media's independent conclusions supported the CinC's OPDEC plan, and the Principles of Information were not violated. However, the media and the situation may not always be so accommodating.

Some deception activities may call for a less-than-completely honest approach to the media. This is the "thin ice" of media relations about which unit Public Affairs Officers have nightmares. But, ambiguity or misdirection "can be accomplished, incidentally, by telling only the truth . . . 'truths do not constitute *the* truth'"[14] [emphasis added]. Possible sources of such ambiguity (or misdirection) could come from briefings (background or open), press releases or again, selective access of the media to deception-enhancing areas of the theater.

An example of such truths that don't tell the whole story was revealed in the Coast Guard response to the first surge of Haitian migrants to the U.S. in 1988. Only one additional cutter was available to supplement the sole cutter assigned to the task of interdiction. Even with this additional resource, vast numbers of refugees were expected to get through. In order to reduce the exodus at the source, the Coast Guard took the offensive in the media, announcing a dramatic "doubling of patrol cutters" with separate pictures of large numbers of cutters. The expected surge petered out quickly as the Coast Guard maximized media coverage (including video footage) of the few interdictions that did occur. The word on the Haitian strees soon became "don't bother going now, the interdiction effort is too heavy."[15]

A more clear-cut deceit occurred during Operation EL DORADO CANYON. In addition

17

to the distraction of the Mediterranean carriers mentioned above, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, as a member of the National Security Council Staff, took it upon himself to leak disinformation to the press -- yes, there had been an operation planned but it had been postponed for a "combination of factors."[16] This type of deception can be attempted at either a press conference or through a "leak" or released as "non-attributable background." This is a case of outright lying to the media and would seem to violate the guidelines of the Principles of Information. It is indicative of the horns of a dilemma that the commander can find himself upon - mission success and U.S. lives versus adherence to the Principles of Information.

To this point, this paper has avoided the use of the word 'propaganda' in connection with media-OPDEC, primarily because of its inflammatory connotation. However, it is undeniable that propaganda is an appropriate term for some of the disinformation that may be considered in a media-OPDEC plan. There is a 'silver bullet' quality to this type of deception - you can only fire it once. Once used and revealed by either the press or the enemy, further deception practices of this sort will be significantly less (albeit not entirely) unsuccessful, and the loss of the military's credibility may have far-reaching implications. This observation is captured in "Axelrod's contribution: There are circumstances where deception assets should be husbanded despite the costs of maintenance and risk of waste, awaiting a more fruitful use. Such decisions are often susceptible to rational analysis."[17]

It should be clear that media-OPDEC has potential uses across the spectrum of conflict - not just combat operations. Productive use of the media (OPDEC or otherwise) would seem to be an important consideration in insurgent operations as both revolutionaries and governments vie for the loyalty of the people and the support of the international community. Applications in peacetime contingency operations, peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism, and low intensity conflict examples have been given above, but the range of possibilities is limited only by the imagination of the commander and his staff. But as

already indicated, there are implications that may extend far beyond the realm of military operations when the commander employs media-OPDEC.

COORDINATION.    Since much of the operational deception as supported by the media will have to come from the highest levels of the government, media-OPDEC should be regarded as a Unified CinC's tool.  At lower levels in the chain of command, the theater perspective and appropriate deference to long-term implications may be missing.  Just as the CinC should include in his commander's estimate the diplomatic and economic actions he desires to be implemented as part of a military option, he should also include the deception activities he desires to conduct (especially if they enter the gray area of the Principles of Information) or have to be supported actively by superiors.  It is imperative that the National Command Authority (NCA), Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the CinC "sing from the same sheet of music" if the media-OPDEC is to be believable.  For media-OPDEC that clearly violates the DoD's Principles of Information, the NCA must make the determination to employ it or not -- this is a political question that is beyond the authority of the CinC to answer.  However, I would argue that as the level of intensity of conflict goes up, the concern for adherance to the Principles of Information will go down.  For "it is precisely when the resources are stretched and the tasks many, when the forces are evenly matched and the issue trembles in the balance, that successful deception matters most."[18]

ENEMY USE OF MEDIA-OPDEC.  An operational commander must be alert to an enemy's use of the media to achieve operational impact.  Two Gulf War examples are offered. The first is the Iraqi media exploitation of the coalition bombing of a purported "baby formula factory."  While the U.S. press briefers claimed that the footage was in fact a chemical munitions factory, they could offer little concrete evidence to this effect.  A second example is the coalition bombing of an Iraqi command and control bunker.  Apparently this bunker was being used as an air raid shelter for civilians in addition to the military functions attributed to it by the U.S.  The death more than 90 civilians was widely and

19

graphically reported around the world the same day. That U.S. officials were convinced this was a valid military target was convincingly conveyed during subsequent press briefings, but again, little proof was offered. While producing such documentation may not have been possible due to security considerations, the net effect of the reporting of these events was to the benefit of the Iraqi cause and may have had some influence upon subsequent U.S. targeting decisions.

Given probable U.S military superiority in potential conflicts, enemies may try to take advantage of what many consider to be the U.S.'s center of gravity: public opinion concerning the conflict. U.S commanders must be prepared to provide factual reports (remember the Principles of Information) that contravene or explain the event in question, even if it means having to admit a mistake or conduct a mini-course in the law of armed conflict (in quotable 20 second bites). However, the government spokesmen must be credible for the explanations to be believed by the American (and international) populations - and that credibility may have been degraded by previous media-OPDEC activities.

# CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

The employment of media-OPDEC should be in support of the commander's total OPDEC package and should be specifically targeted towards the unique characteristics of the electronic media with its emphasis on short, sensational, visually oriented reporting. It should take advantage of the electronic media's global coverage and international perspective, and may be able to find some leverage in the electronic media's tension between in-depth, accurate reporting and its desire to be nearly instantaneous.

While this paper does not present a laundry list of media-OPDEC tactics, it should be apparent that there is a wide range of media OPDEC options available to the commander, ranging from complete media exclusion to outright lying. It should also apparent that each of these options carries with it both opportunity and risk.

Opportunity is offered by the capability of the electronic media to support a commander's OPDEC program in ways not possible ten years ago. But these opportunities are in part balanced by the potential of damage to the positive, ethical public image now enjoyed by, and important to, today's military. Commanders contemplating the use of media-OPDEC should remember "Nixon's Law: Operations should be planned and conducted secure in the knowledge that everything will eventually be revealed."[1] Herein lies the risk that the commander must balance with opportunity.

APPENDIX I

## Department of Defense Principles of Information[1]

It is the policy of DoD to make available timely and accurate information so that the public, Congress, and members representing the press, radio and television may assess and understand the facts about national security and defense strategy. Requests for information from organizations and private citizen will be answered as responsibly and rapidly as possible. In carrying out this policy, the following Principles of Information apply:

Information will be made fully and readily available, consistent with statutory requirements, unless its release is precluded by current and valid security classification. The provisions of the Freedom of Information Act will be supported in both letter and spirit.

A free flow of general and military information will be made available, without censorship or propaganda, to men and women of the Armed Forces and their dependents.

Information will not be classified or otherwise withheld to protect the government from criticism or embarrassment.

Information will only be withheld when disclosure would adversely effect national security or threaten the safety or privacy of the men and women of the Armed Forces.

The Department's obligation to provide the public with information on its major programs may require detailed public affairs planning and coordination within the Department and with other government agencies. The sole purpose of such activity is to expedite the flow of information to the public: propaganda has no place in the Department of Defense public Affairs programs.

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23

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# NOTES

## Chapter II

[1] Charles A. Dana, quoted in Lewis Lapham, "Trained Seals and Sitting Ducks," Harper's Magazine, May, 1991, p. 10.

[2] Peter J. Brown, " The DoD and the Flyaway Dish," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, August 1991, p. 62.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 63.

## Chapter III

[1] Michael P. Erdle, "The News Media and Military Operations," Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: p.4. "A 1981 Lichter and Rothman study interviewed 240 journalist and broadcasters and confirmed" that these media representatives have a decidedly "left-of-center" inclination.

[2] U.S. Department of Defense, The Principles of Information, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C. 1982, p.2.

[3] Ibid., p 2.

[4] Conversations with CDR El Alwardt, USN, and LCDR Jeff Karonis, USCG, Naval War College, Newport, RI: 14 January 1992.

## Chapter IV

[1] Barton Whaley, Strategem: Deception and Surprise in War, ( Cambridge, Mass: MIT Center for International Studies, 1969), p. 234.

[2] Micheal I. Handel, "On Deception," Unpublished Handout, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1991 p. 1.

## Chapter V

[1] Renaldo K. Keene, "Dealing with the Media," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, August 1991, p. 69.

[2] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore, (Princeton , NJ: Deception Research Program, 1981),p.21.

[3] Ibid., p. 41.

[4] Ibid., p. 44.

[5] Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe, ( Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1948), p. 169.

[6] Renaldo R. Keene, "Dealing with the Media," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, August 1991, p. 70.

[7] Eisenhower, Ibid., p. 169.

[8] It was somewhat disturbing to see recently - in some cases, very recently - retired Generals and Admirals explaining to the world at large how the war would be fought. While I doubt that significant classified information was compromised, they certainly provided the enemy with valuable U.S military perspectives on the conflict. In the case of Saddam Hussein, the information fell on deaf ears. However, does our warfighting future promise such a forgiving enemy? While there is no easy answer, perhaps there should be some restrictions placed on such activities by military retirees/veterans. They could be similar to the restrictions on U.S. Government "contracting officers" who are prohibited from taking employment with companies competing for government business for a period of some years. By the expiration of the exclusion period, the currency of the ex-service member would remove some credibility from their prognostications.

[9] Daniel P. Bolger, Americans at War: 1975-1986, An Era of Violent Peace, ( Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988, p.417. It is worth noting that the U.S. carriers did participate in the strike that night. However, because of the 5 hour flight time that the F-111s faced after leaving the air bases in England, it was imperative that attention be directed away from their takeoffs. This was accomplished through the mentioned focus on the carriers and the cover story of routine exercises for the F-111s.

[10] Michael I. Handel, "On Deception," Unpublished Handout, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1991 p. 1.

[11] Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore, p. 22.

[12] Handel, Ibid., p. 1.

[13] Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore, p. 16.

[14] Ibid., p. 23.

[15] Interview with Jeff Karonis, LCDR, USCG, (then Seventh Coast Guard District Public Affairs Officer), Naval War College, Newport, RI: 4 February 1992.

[16] David C. Martin and John Wolcott, Best Laid Plans: The Inside Story of America's War Against Terrorism, ( New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988) p. 303.

[17] Deception Maxims: Fact and Folklore, p. 27.

[18] Michael I. Handel, Military Deception in Peace and War, (Tel Aviv: Hebrew University, 1985) p. 41.


Chapter VI

[1] Conway Ziegler, comment in a Operations Course Seminar., U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 10 February 1992.


Appendix I

[1] U.S. Department of Defense, The Principles of Information, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C. 1982, p.2.